

STATEMENT OF PAUL HOFFMAN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, FISH AND WILDLIFE AND PARKS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, UNITED STATES SENATE, CONCERNING S. 1808 TO PROVIDE FOR THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AT HISTORICALLY WOMEN'S PUBLIC COLLEGES OR UNIVERSITIES.

May 20, 2004

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 1808, which authorizes the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to make matching grants totaling up to \$14 million annually from FY 2004 through FY 2008 to historically women's public colleges and universities to preserve and repair buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Under this bill, the grants to historically women's public colleges and universities would be made under the authority of Section 101 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Department appreciates the goals of this bill to promote historic preservation at historically women's colleges and universities. However, given current fiscal restraints, the Administration cannot support a new funding responsibility that could effectively take funding away from grants to States and Indian tribes and divert it to these specific purposes.

We are supportive of efforts to preserve significant historic buildings on the campuses of historically women's colleges and universities. The Department certainly recognizes that these are important national historic treasures worthy of our care and attention.

However, we strongly support the principle that States, Indian tribes, and local governments – not the Federal government – are best suited to determine the highest priorities for awarding

grants in each jurisdiction under the Historic Preservation Fund. This has been the guiding idea of the National Historic Preservation Act since its passage in the mid-1960s. Under the current process, the Department allocates blocks of funds to States and to Indian tribes who then, in turn, award funding to properties and projects that meet the most urgent needs within the individual jurisdiction. There are many and very worthy projects everywhere, including other individual and classes of historic buildings that are eligible for assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund.

We believe there is important flexibility and adequate authority already built into the National Historic Preservation Act for special initiatives that can address a broad range of needs. We do not support earmarking funds because it restricts that capability of States and Indian tribes to identify and address the most pressing needs.

Additionally, to our knowledge, condition assessments have not been completed for the seven women's colleges and universities cited in the bill. This is an important step to take before awarding grant money to a project since there are other, equally worthy projects, as well as numerous other historic buildings in need of assistance for deferred repairs. We are unaware of any needs assessment that identifies these seven schools to the exclusion of others. We are likewise unaware of any assessment that supports the funding amounts allotted to each school. Finally, we are concerned about the precedent that the Federal share of the cost of grants in this bill is 80 percent, when most of our historic preservation fund grant programs require a 50 percent non-Federal match.

We are also unaware of any past legislation where Congress has given another Federal agency – in this case, the Department of Housing and Urban Development – the responsibility for using resources from a program established within the Department of the Interior. While many Federal agencies have benefited from the Historic Preservation Fund in the past, the responsibility for administering the program has always rested with the Department of the Interior. We do not believe this to be a good precedent for departmental programs even if we believed the earmarking of funds for these seven schools was merited.

There are other sources of funding available for the restoration of historically women's colleges and universities. One national example is the Save America's Treasures program that awards grants for preservation and conservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and nationally significant historic structures and sites. Each historically women's colleges and universities is a "national class property" and would, we believe, compete favorably in the Save America's Treasures program as well in any other fundraising campaign. The Department would be more than happy to work with the colleges and universities to develop Save America's Treasures applications as well as fundraising strategies to accomplish this important work.

This concludes my prepared testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.